



# YOSEMITE

## NATIONAL PARK

*"A national park, preserved in all its beauty and at the same time made accessible to the public for all time, is as grand a heritage as it is possible to leave to future generations."*

— Robert Bradford Marshall

## PLANNING UPDATE

Volume 29

July 2006

*"...we continue to look toward Yosemite's future and will be asking you to share your concerns with us on a number of projects."*

Dear Yosemite Friends,

From CNN to local newspapers, you may have heard about the geologic event occurring 12 miles west of Yosemite's westernmost border, outside of the community of El Portal. A significant rock-slide has buried a portion of Highway 140 in the Merced River canyon. The park remains open and is accessible from four other entrances (Evergreen Road to Hetch Hetchy, Highway 41 from the south, and Highway 120 from the northwest and from the east). But in the meantime, residents, employees, and visitors alike are contending with alternate routes and longer commutes. The permanent solution is still a ways away.



While this is an immediate concern for staff, neighbors, and visitors, we continue to look toward Yosemite's future and will be asking you to share your concerns with us on a number of projects. Public scoping for planning in Tuolumne is currently underway and the NPS team is preparing for open houses (see page 4). Public scoping is also slated to begin this summer on the El Capitan Meadow

Restoration Project, as well as improvements to the El Portal Road between its intersection at Big Oak Flat Road (near the site of the former Cascades Diversion Dam) and Pohono Bridge (see page 5).

As Yosemite's planning program moves forward, I want to assure you that the National Park Service is committed to providing timely and accurate information. Broad public involvement and shared understanding of the decision-making process are key to a successful planning process. In the weeks and months to come, look to this *Planning Update* newsletter for information regarding the multiple opportunities for everyone to share their ideas and concerns about this exceptional place.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Tollefson  
Park Superintendent

## What are *Outstandingly Remarkable Values*?

**O**utstandingly Remarkable Values are defined by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act as the unique characteristics that make a river stand apart from all other rivers in the country. Along with preserving the free-flowing character of a river, these values are what drive the process for designating a Wild and Scenic River. They are the superlative qualities—recreational, biological, cultural, scenic, hydrologic, geologic, scientific—that will be protected for the benefit of future generations. Along with possessing a free-flowing character, a waterway need only contain one such river-related value to be eligible for Wild and Scenic River designation.

To access a copy of the Draft Outstandingly Remarkable Values Technical Report visit: [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning) or through any other contact points listed on the back of the this update.

*The largest glacier on the western flank of the Sierra Nevada is part of the spectacular mountain views from the Lyell Fork*

—Draft Outstandingly Remarkable Values Report

Volume 29

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The Planning Update is an occasional publication of the National Park Service, Office of the Superintendent, Yosemite National Park, P. O. Box 577, Yosemite, CA 95389.

Marea Ortiz edited this issue with contributions from Kristina Rylands, Mark Husbands, Elexis Mayer, and Monica Buhler.

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# Tuolumne Planning Effort

Often a place where solitude is eminent, and, wilderness stretches seemingly endless before you, the Tuolumne River begins its journey; Tuolumne Meadows lies 8,600 feet above sea level, near the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park at Tioga Pass.

In 1984, Congress designated 83 miles of the Tuolumne River as a Wild and Scenic River. This included 54 miles of the river under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park. In accordance with the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Park Service must prepare a comprehensive management plan to guide future decisions in the river corridor. The Tuolumne



Tuolumne River

NPS photo



Bridge over Tuolumne River at Pate Valley

NPS photo

Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan (Tuolumne River Plan) Environmental Impact Statement will evaluate a range of alternatives that present the management direction for protecting the free-flowing condition and unique values of the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park. More detailed planning for Tuolumne Meadows will also be a part of this effort.



Tuolumne Meadows

NPS photo

# Public Scoping Open Now!



*We're looking for your comments and ideas.*

Public scoping for two Tuolumne plans is taking place now to take advantage of the summer season when the Tuolumne Meadows area is open and accessible after a long winter of being snowbound. This scoping process is an early opportunity for people to share their ideas about the future and continued protection of the Tuolumne River and Tuolumne Meadows area. This public scoping process applies to the National Historic Preservation Act's public involvement requirements in addition to the National Environmental Policy Act.

The Tuolumne River Plan will lay out the vision and framework for management within the Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River corridor. It will provide the broader vision that will guide the site specific decisions made in the Tuolumne Meadows Plan. The Tuolumne Meadows Plan will implement the goals established in the Tuolumne River Plan and the *General Management Plan* specific to the Tuolumne Meadows area. The Tuolumne Meadows Plan will also present the specific details relating to restoration, as well as the location of individual buildings and services within the area. Because the plans are so closely related, they will be analyzed together in the same environmental impact statement.

During public scoping, your ideas about the management of the Tuolumne River, as well as comments about the Tuolumne Meadows area are needed. When writing comments, consider the following:

- What do you love about Tuolumne?
- What do you do while you're there?
- What would you like to see protected or restored?
- What kinds of services or facilities should be offered?



Mt. Dana, headwaters  
of the Dana Fork of the  
Tuolumne River

NPS photo

At this beginning stage we are fact-finding and information gathering, trying to identify all of the various issues and concerns that will need to be addressed in planning for the future of Tuolumne.

This scoping period will close 60 days after the Federal Register publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

## How can I stay informed and get involved?

There are many opportunities to engage with park planners during this process. We will be having a series of open houses which we welcome you to attend; dates, times, and locations are listed on page 4. Beyond the scoping period, we'll also be hosting a series of public workshops during the alternatives development process.

To access a downloadable copy of the *"Participant Guide: Planning In Tuolumne,"* visit our park website at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning).

## Stay Tuned

Expect more information and public involvement opportunities for other planning efforts that we will need your help with. They are:

**Yosemite Village Plan:** What support facilities should be available to visitors as they leave the parking lot? This and other questions will be addressed as we look at the footprint of Yosemite Village.

**El Portal Plan:** This process will be an effort between the park, the community and the public to determine the types and locations of facilities that should be in El Portal, both to satisfy park functions and for the support and well-being of the community.

**Yosemite Village Interim Parking Improvements Plan (Camp 6):** Work is continuing on alternatives development and an Environmental Assessment is expected to be released for public review in fall 2006.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

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### Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan/ Tuolumne Meadows Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

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#### Open House Schedule:

4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. unless otherwise indicated

Modesto	Wednesday	July 12, 2006	Modesto Jr. College/West Campus Center Lounge 2201 Blue Gum Ave.
San Francisco	Thursday	July 13, 2006	Fort Mason, Building 201 (Bay & Franklin Streets)
Tuolumne Meadows	Tuesday	July 18, 2006	Parsons Lodge
Lee Vining	Wednesday	July 19, 2006	Lee Vining Community Center 296 Mattly Ave.
Yosemite Valley	Wednesday	July 26, 2006	Visitor Center Auditorium (1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.)
Mariposa	Monday	August 7, 2006	Mariposa Government Center 5100 Bullion Street
Oakhurst	Monday	August 14, 2006	Oakhurst Community Center 3980 Road 425-B
Sonora	Tuesday	August 15, 2006	Columbia College/Manzanita Bldg. Community Ed. Room 11600 Columbia College Dr.
Groveland	Thursday	August 17, 2006	Groveland Library 18990 State Hwy. 120

### Tuolumne Planning Timeline

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#### Fall 2006 – Spring 2007

Comments received during the public scoping period will be analyzed and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared.

#### Summer 2007

Public will be able to review and comment on the Draft EIS.

#### Fall 2007

Comments received during the review period will then be analyzed and incorporated into the Final EIS as necessary.

#### Winter 2008

The Final Tuolumne River Plan/Tuolumne Meadows Plan and EIS will be released to the public, followed by a 30-day no-action period.

#### Spring 2008

Record of Decision is anticipated to be signed by the National Park Service Pacific West Regional Director.

# Seeking Your Comments this Summer and Fall

## El Capitan Meadow Restoration Project\*

The sixty-acre El Capitan Meadow is located in the western portion of Yosemite Valley just south of the base of El Capitan. It is a popular destination for visitors of all recreation and sightseeing interests, especially those craning their necks to see rock-climbers scaling the face of the huge granite monolith. Conditions in the meadow are becoming increasingly degraded, partly due to a lack of designated trails, and extensive use of social (informal) trails. Historic actions such as tilling, ditching, inadequate culverts and road building have also contributed to meadow deterioration.

Proposed actions for the restoration project would mitigate impacts on meadow vegetation while continuing to provide recreational opportunities. Actions proposed would also emphasize restoring ecological processes to maintain El Capitan Meadow. Methods for the most effective restoration will be explored and considered throughout this planning process, and will rely on the input of park staff and the public. *The public scoping comment period will begin in late summer and run through early fall 2006. Please stay tuned for more information about this upcoming project.*

## Segment D-El Portal Road Improvements\*

This project involves the easternmost portion of the El Portal Road – Segment D– which includes a one mile section between the junction of the Big Oak Flat and El Portal Roads (at the former Cascades Diversion Dam site) and the Pohono Bridge. This project proposes to repair road and embankment damage resulting from the 1997 flood and possibly redesign the intersection to improve traffic flow and safety. Proposed drainage improvements include rebuilding existing culverts to carry larger volume and constructing additional culverts for better water flow. *Look for the public scoping comment period to open late this summer/early fall 2006.*

\*To request planning documents for review, fill out and return the coupon on the back of this newsletter. These will also be available on the park's website at [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning).



El Capitan

NPS photo

## Yosemite Valley Open Houses

Come to Yosemite and talk with us in person about our plans and projects. Public meetings and monthly Open Houses are a great way to learn more about what is going on in the park. These forums offer a chance for you to meet with park and project managers to get your opinions heard, or your questions answered. Open Houses are held monthly in the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center Auditorium. See the park website for more details: [www.nps.gov/yose/planning](http://www.nps.gov/yose/planning).

### Open House Dates

Wednesday, July 26 1-5pm

Wednesday, August 30 1-5pm

Wednesday, September 27 1-5pm



Photo by Sam Vasquez

Visitor at March 2006 Open House

## Sign up for the Yosemite Electronic Newsletter

[www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm)



NPS Photo

## Stay Involved!

If you would like to receive a copy of planning documents for review, please check the boxes below that apply. **If you have already requested one of these documents, you do not need to submit another request.**

### **Tuolumne Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive**

#### **Management Plan/Tuolumne Meadows Plan and EIS**

☐ CD

☐ Hard Copy

*Draft available summer 2007*

#### **El Capitan Meadow Restoration Project EA**

☐ CD

☐ Hard Copy

*Available spring 2007*

#### **Segment D-El Portal Road Improvements EA**

☐ CD

☐ Hard Copy

*Available winter 2006/2007*

#### **Rehabilitation of the Glacier Point Road EA**

☐ CD

☐ Hard Copy

*Available late fall 2006*

Email your request to:

[Yose\\_planning@nps.gov](mailto:Yose_planning@nps.gov)

Fill out and mail coupon to:

Yosemite Planning

P.O. Box 577

Yosemite, CA 95389

FAX this coupon to:

209/379-1294

Phone in your request to:

209/379-1365

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